

# Saved By Deception!

*How Jewish  
Prisoners Posing  
As Scientists  
Tricked The Nazis  
& Built A Fake  
Super-Weapon*

*This is the story of:*

- A boy whose entire world came crashing down around him in 1939...
- A teenager who witnessed the Warsaw Ghetto during its legendary uprising...
- A Jewish scientist who was forced to help the Nazis build a secret wonder-weapon that would turn the tide of the war...
- An American soldier who helped liberate several POW camps from the clutches of the Germans...

*This is the story of one man...  
Mr. George Topas.*



• Turx



It was the beginning of 1945 and as the tide of the war was turning the Nazis were getting desperate. The top-secret weapon being worked on by an elite corps of scientists at Flossenbourg was running a few months behind schedule. The wonder weapon was supposed to have been ready for testing no later than December 1944. Here they were in January 1945 and the crew was asking for more time.

The upper echelons of the Nazi party, with a sanguine naïveté so typical of the thousand-year empire grasping at its last straws, were confident that the advent of this super weapon would reverse the course of the war in a matter of weeks. Of course, that would only be possible if the weapon was actually completed... but in reality it would never be. The entire project was little more than an elaborate hoax—a hoax that would help drain the Nazis of funds and resources at a time when they needed them most desperately; a hoax that would permit the Third Reich to cling to the fallacious belief that the war might just turn in their favor at the twelfth hour.

Much to the Nazis' regret, not only would this invention never materialize, but the "inventors" working on it were actually a group of adept Jewish prisoners trying to evade the gas chambers. They were joined together with an odd sprinkling of mediocre German scientists prepared to do anything to keep them away from the dreaded Russian front.

Spearheaded by SS head Heinrich Himmler himself, the project had originally called for assembling all the top scientists and inventors across the concentration camp system. What the Nazis acquired instead was a group of ordinary, mostly Jewish men who shared powerful instincts for survival and astute brains for passing entry exams. Once in the laboratory they put their minds to use in trying to develop the most effective techniques for getting deadline extensions, while at the same time constructing something resembling a weapon that looked complex enough for the Nazi guards to meekly accept that what was

being built was simply beyond their humble capacities.

For a while, they succeeded. The "scientists" worked around the clock drawing up "blueprints," translating the works of Russian scientists who had done prior "research" in this particular "field," and erecting a giant contraption that was sure to stoke the fuels of fear in the enemy.

Then 1945 rolled along. Berlin was getting jittery, and rumors that some of the



Unfinished Polish bombers, Okecie military airport, near Warsaw during the German invasion of Poland.



Rabbi Moshe Isaac Hagerman of the small town Olkusz in southern Poland, dressed in *tallis* and *tefillin*, being publicly humiliated by German soldiers. July 31, 1940.

"scientists" just weren't as cut out for the job began to proliferate among the ranks of the Nazi elite.

One day, a top professor in civilian clothing from the prestigious Kaiser Wilhelm Institute arrived at Flossenbourg and set up shop in the laboratory. His job was to weed out the frauds that were certain to have infiltrated the group.

It was one thing to hoodwink members of the German political and military class, who knew little about the various "sciences" employed in the creation of the secret invention. For them, the articulation of authentic-sounding terms, concepts and formulas would suffice... but how would they fare against one of Germany's top scientists?

In the coming days, the professor would work with calculated meticulousness, calling up each "scientist" and "inventor" for an extensive interview and exam. He was to determine who knew what, how well he knew it and whether or not he would remain part of the team. There was little doubt that for most of the Jews in the group the gig was up.... or was it?

## Working for the *Luftwaffe*

George Topas was 14 when the Nazis rampaged through Poland and conquered Warsaw, where he and his family lived. They were eventually locked into the tiny Warsaw ghetto with almost half a million other Jews, where George's strong work ethic, sense of humor and unshakable faith helped him survive. *Zman* was privileged to meet with Mr. Topas and hear his inspiring story firsthand.

In 1942, now 16, Topas was assigned his first job with the German *Luftwaffe* at their base in Bielany, a suburb of Warsaw. To reach his job, he was permitted to leave the ghetto, under guard. This was during the time that mass deportations to Treblinka were taking place. At first the Germans looked for "volunteers" to "resettle" at Treblinka, where they were promised "decent jobs" and "adequate working conditions." In fact, all who volunteered were unwittingly



*Zman* correspondent Turx interviewing George Topas at his home.



Topas points to the balcony of his family home in the Warsaw ghetto before the uprising. On the balcony one can clearly see Topas' father and younger brother.

volunteering to board a train to Treblinka, one of the most notorious death camps. Once there they were herded into crowded gas chambers and exterminated.

After a while, the Jews realized that it was a ruse and stopped volunteering. The best hope was to get a work permit.

"At that time," Topas recalls, "the Warsaw ghetto was already—you might say—'on fire.' The people were frightened and they